The Grotesque Mode in 19th and 20th Century American Fiction

Code Apogée
1MIAM56

Composante(s)
UFR Langues et Civilisations

Période de l'année
Semestre 1

En bref

- **Mobilité d'études:** Oui
- **Accessible à distance:** Non

Présentation

Description

This seminar will examine the grotesque mode, a recurrent feature of American literature, by focusing on fiction works from the 19th and the 20th centuries. The grotesque is notoriously difficult to define. In a recent study, American critic Geoffrey Galt Harpham begins with this elusive definition: “Grotesqueries both require and defeat definition; they are neither so regular and rhythmical that they settle easily into our categories, nor so unprecedented that we do not recognize them at all. They stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world” (3). For French scholar Maurice Lévy, the grotesque “is the presence of something unacceptable around us or within us that we turn into a circus freak in order to domesticate it or make it less unbearable” (162). Paula Uruburu, an American scholar, underlines that the grotesque deliberately arouses “contradictory emotions, such as fear, anger, disgust, hate, surprise, and amusement in a reader,” hence the “repulsion-fascination syndrome” (13) it provokes. The grotesque, therefore, requires special deciphering that will be examined in the seminar. An analysis of a selection of grotesque American fiction will also allow us to study the reasons for the use of the grotesque and the role it plays.

The students following this seminar will be expected to have read the books on the syllabus before the beginning of classes—most of them can be accessed on the internet. They will have to make oral presentations drawing parallels between theoretical books in the bibliography and the fiction works on the syllabus. The stress will be put on mastering the tools necessary to analyze literary works, on methodology and oral expression.

Contrôle des connaissances

Informations non contractuelles.
Dernière mise à jour le 14 mai 2025

Every student following the seminar will be requested to make an oral presentation of either a passage or a theme from the books on the syllabus. The students who cannot attend the seminar on a regular basis are invited to contact Professor Antolin (pascale.antolin@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr) by email early in September. They will have **to write a paper and take an oral exam** at the end of the semester.

Informations complémentaires

Ouvert aux étudiant·es en mobilité sous réserve du nombre de places disponibles.

Bibliographie

Primary sources (compulsory reading)

* Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Masque of the Red Death” (internet).
* Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “The Minister’s Black Veil” in *Twice-Told Tales* (internet).
* Crane, Stephen. “The Monster” in *The Monster and Other Stories* (internet).
* Norris, Frank. *McTeague* (1899).
* Anderson, Sherwood. *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919).
* Nathanael West. *The Day of the Locust* (1940).

Background Reading (recommended)

Most of these books can be borrowed from the Henri Guillemin Library

* Bakhtine, Mikhaïl. *L’œuvre de Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen-Âge et sous la Renaissance*. Trad. Andrée Robel. Paris : Gallimard Tel, 1970.
* Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradictions in Art and Literature* (1982).
* Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
* Lévy, Maurice. « Gothique, Grotesque : Préface à l’ébauche d’une réflexion sur une possible relation », *Regards européens sur le monde anglo-américain*. Coll. Rule Britannia. Paris : Presses de l’université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1992 (157-166).
* Meindl, Dieter. *American Fiction and the Metaphysics of the Grotesque* (1996). (Library)
* Rosen, Elisheva. *Sur le grotesque. L’ancien et le nouveau dans la réflexion esthétique*. Vincennes : Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1991.
* Thomson, Philip. *The Grotesque*. London: Methuen, 1972.
* Uruburu, Paula. *The Gruesome Doorway. An Analysis of the American Grotesque*. New York: Peter Lang, 1987.

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